

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Office Action dated December 29, 2006, has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

No claims are hereby amended; no claims are newly added; no claims are canceled. Claims 20 and 21 have previously been withdrawn per Applicants' provisional election of Group I (claims 1-19 readable thereon) in the Response to Restriction Requirement dated March 7, 2005. Accordingly, claims 1-19 and 22-23 are currently pending. Reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

In the Office Action, claims 1, 2, 12, 17 and 18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,129,804 (to Gaynes et al.)(hereinafter "Gaynes") in view of Japanese Laid Open Patent Application Publication No. 2001-356353 (to Satoshi)(hereinafter "Satoshi"). Claims 1, 12 and 16-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2002/0062787 A1 (to Hashizume et al.)(hereinafter "Hashizume"), or in the alternative, under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Hashizume in view of Satoshi. Claims 2-11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Gaynes or Hashizume, with or without Satoshi, and further in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0043344 A1 (to Watanabe et al.)(hereinafter "Watanabe") and U.S. Patent No. 5,961,777 (to Kakinuma)(hereinafter "Kakinuma"). Claim 19 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as allegedly unpatentable over Gaynes or Hashizume and further in view of Satoshi.

The rejection of claims 1-19 is respectfully traversed and reconsideration is requested. Claims 1-19 are allowable over the cited references in that each of these claims recite a combination of elements including, for example, "at least one loader arranged at the first side of

the substrate bonding station for loading the unbonded first and second substrates into the substrate bonding station; at least one unloader arranged at the second side for unloading bonded ones of the first and second substrates, wherein the substrate bonding station includes third and fourth sides, wherein the third side is proximate the fourth side; and a sealing member wherein the sealing member thickness is set according to a pressure applied to the first and second glass substrates.” None of the cited references including, Gaynes, Hashizume, Watanabe, Kakinuma or Satoshi, singly or in any combination, teach or suggest at least these features of the claimed invention.

In regard to the rejection of claims 1, 2, 12, 17 and 18 as allegedly obvious over the proposed combination of Gaynes and Satoshi, the Examiner states that, “Satoshi discloses that it is known to use a sealing member wherein the sealing member thickness is set according to a pressure applied to the first and second substrates. In paragraphs 0016-0017, Satoshi discloses an O-ring which halts the downward movement of the top chamber – this halt location would be a sealing member thickness. One in the art would appreciate that the halt the downward movement would prevent crushing of the substrates by control of the appropriate thickness. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to have utilized such sealing members in order to prevent crushing of the substrate (Office Action at page 3).” Applicants respectfully disagree with the Examiner.

Satoshi does not disclose anywhere in the cited paragraphs that “it is known” to use a sealing member wherein the sealing member thickness is set according to a pressure applied to the first and second substrates. Satoshi’s O-ring appears to be used for the purpose of maintaining vacuum pressure. Further, Satoshi’s O-ring appears to be of a standard thickness. Furthermore, according to Satoshi’s Figure 3, it appears as if the O-ring has nothing to do with substrates but appears instead to be an appendage to the overall assembly device. It is not clear

from Satoshi's text or Figure 3 exactly what role the O-ring plays with regard to pressing of any substrates. In fact, according to paragraph [0023] of Satoshi, as best understood, a load cell (33) works as a welding-pressure sensor and provides a welding-pressure to substrates (1a and 1b). Accordingly, Applicants maintain that the Examiner's proposed combination of references do not render the claimed subject matter obvious. Accordingly, claim 1 and claims 2-19, which depend either directly or indirectly upon claim 1, are allowable over the cited references.

In regard to the rejection of claims 1, 12 and 16-19 as allegedly obvious over the proposed combination of Hashizume and Satoshi, the Examiner states, in reference to Hashizume, “[t]he sealing member thickness is capable of being used such that it is set according to a pressure applied to the first and second substrates” (Office Action at page 4) but offers no direct support for such a conclusion. The Examiner then states, again in reference to Hashizume, “[i]n any event, while Hazishume discloses a sealing member, one could theoretically argue that this sealing member is not capable of having the sealing member thickness is set according to a pressure applied to the first and second glass substrates (Office Action at pages 4-5).” The Examiner then turns to Satoshi. However, as previously noted, Satoshi does not disclose anywhere in the cited paragraphs that “it is known” to use a sealing member wherein the sealing member thickness is set according to a pressure applied to the first and second substrates. Satoshi's O-ring appears to be used for the purpose of maintaining vacuum pressure. Further, Satoshi's O-ring appears to be of a standard thickness. Furthermore, according to Satoshi's Figure 3, it appears as if the O-ring has nothing to do with substrates but appears instead to be an appendage to the overall assembly device. It is not clear from Satoshi's text or Figure 3 exactly what role the O-ring plays with regard to pressing of any substrates. In fact, according to paragraph [0023] of Satoshi, as best understood, a load cell (33) works as a welding-pressure sensor and provides a welding-pressure to substrates (1a and 1b). Accordingly, Applicants

maintain that the Examiner's proposed combination of references do not render the claimed subject matter obvious. Accordingly, claim 1 and claims 2-19, which depend either directly or indirectly upon claim 1, are allowable over the cited references.

Similarly, claims 22 and 23 which depend from claim 2 are allowable over any proposed combination of references by virtue of their dependency upon allowable claim 1 and for the additional limitations that they recite.

Applicants believe the foregoing remarks place the application in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911.

Respectfully submitted,

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